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NEW CODE ENSURES SAFER FOOD FOR MARICOPA COUNTY

Industry Supports New Code, Applauds County's Efforts

(Phoenix)— Even the best can get better. Maricopa County, winner of the national Crumline Award for excellence in food safety, has a new food code. The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors adopted the new environmental health code today that includes strategies to ensure safer food for our citizens.

The County code clarifies the state code adopted last October and establishes a new "Adventure Food" category, requires stricter food safety certification, and provides new fee and permitting options. Industry members testified in favor of the new code today and praised the County for their efforts.

"We have been involved with the County from the beginning and are very supportive of the new code," said Marilyn Halverson, vice president of membership services with the Arizona Restaurant and Hospitality Association. "This code is good for industry, good for the public, and good for everyone."

The new County food code will require the following:

- One certified food service manager per establishment who is directly responsible for training and supervising all food service workers.
- Use of non-latex gloves when handling ready-to-eat items. No bare hand contact is allowed. Ready-to-eat items include foods that will not undergo further heating, like sandwiches, salads, sushi, and other unpackaged food products served cold.
- New "Adventure Food" category for outdoor cookouts like horse or trail rides where food is prepared outside. (Previously, food had to be pre-prepared.)
- Fee increase from \$60 to \$80 for special events that are not pre-paid.
- New option for bed and breakfasts with five or less bedrooms to serve one meal a day without a permit if they properly notify customers the facility is not inspected by the health authority. (Or they can get a permit and submit to inspections.)

The president's National Food Safety Initiative has emphasized safer food handling and processing "from the farm to the fork." The County code requires that all phases of the food flow will be overseen in order to eliminate hazardous practices and provide the safest food-handling methods attainable, thereby making every effort to avoid foodborne illness.

For more information about the Maricopa County Environmental Health code, go to www.maricopa.gov/envsvc. To read about the National Food Safety Initiative, go to www.foodsafety.gov.